THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI AJIT PANJA): (a) to (c) As per central excise law, excise duty in respect of goods chargeable on ad valorem basis is levied on the wholesale price of the goods as determined under section 4 of the Central Excises and Salt Act, 1944, or the rules made thereunder. As far as synthetic fabrics are concerned, excise duty is levied at specific rates and, therefore, the question of assessing duty on the basis of retail price does not arise.

(d) The excise duty rates on polyester fabrics depend upon the value, weight, width, composition and the sector producing or processing the fabrics. The rates of duty on woven fabrics of polyester vary from nil to Rs. 30 per sq. metre depending upon the factors mentioned above.

Jail Visitors Board's visit to Tihar jail

1551. SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Jail Visitors Board visited the Mental Cell of Tihar Jail recently;

(b) whether the members of the Board came across cases where the inmates had been detained therefor years together despite the fact that they had been awarded only minor sentences of imprisonment;

(c) what are the details of the Board's observations; and

(d) what action has been taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI): (a) Yes, Sir. A meeting of the Board of visitors was held on 26-2-88 at Mental Ward, Central Jail Tihar, New Delhi.

(b) and (c) The members of the Board examined 8 prisoners of the Mental Ward who were lodged in the Central Jail, Tihar at different points of time. 5 patients had been found to be fit for dischrage and the members of the Board recommended that after their legal release from the Jail, they should be sent to their homes or some welfare Institutions. The remaining 3 patients were not found fit for discharge and the members recommended that after their legal discharge, they should be shifted to Hospital for Mental Diseases, Shahdara.

(d) Out of the 5 prisoners, who had been recommended to be sent to their Homes/Social Welfare institutions, 4 have been released from the jail and have been sent to the Poor House, Kingsway Camp, Delhi, as they were not in a position to state the place where they would like to go. The remaining one prisoner, namely Shri Munshi Pasi s/o Shri Bandhu Pasi had showed impulsive behaviour after 26-2-88 when his discharge was recommended by the members of the Board and therefore, he has been sent to Hospital for Mental Diseases, Shahdara alongwith the other 3 patients who had been recommended by the members of the Board for sending to HMD Shahdara for medical treatment/care.

Payment to M/s. Snamprogetti

1552. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that M/s. Snamprogetti has been paid in Deutsche Mark for technology know-how instead of Lira, whereas Italian credit comes only in Lira; and

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Merger of Scindia Steam Navigation Company with Essar

1553. SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that an Expert Panel has been set up to consider the merger of the Scindia Steam Navigation Company Limited with Essar;

(b) if so, what are the names of the members of the Panel;

(c) whether it is a fact that this Panel has recommended the merger of the two companies and waiver of interest on the loans outstanding against Scindia;

(d) what is the quantum of loan and interest thereon outstanding against Scindia as on 31st March, 1988; and

(e) what is the number of ships with the Scindia Company at present alongwith their type and age?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO): (a) to (c) A Committee consisting of representatives from the Ministries of Finance, Surface Transport, Agriculture and Law have been considering issues arising out of the abolition of Shipping Development Fund Committee on 3rd April, 1987 and the take over of its assets and liabilities by the Government of India. This Committee has *inter-alia* considered proposals, as received from private companies, including Essar, expressing interest in taking over Scindia Steam Navigation Company Limited.

(d) As on 31-3-1988, the amounts outstanding against Scindia Steam Navigation Company stood at Rs. 132.15 crores on account of principal and Rs. 34.26 crores on account of interest.

(e) There are 22 ships in the Scindia fleet, including 19 dry cargo liners and 3 bulk carriers. SCICI has reported that 67 per cent of dead weight tonnage (DWT) is within 15 years old, 20 per cent is within 20 years old and 13 per cent is above 20 years old. The total DWT is 0.5 Million approx.

Allotment of land for setting up of an industrial complex at Farakka

1554. SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the statement made by Shri Jyoti Basu in West Bengal Assembly that delay in handling over land by the Water Resources Ministry of the Government of India, stood in the way of setting up of an industrial complex in Farakka; and

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRIMATI KRISHNA SAHI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A proposal for relinquishment of about 40 acres of land has already been made to the Government of West Bengal by the Farakka Barrage Project in August, 1987.

Speculations in stock markets

1555. SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the fact that an organised group of speculators has been very active in bear hammering in the major stock markets in the country; and

(b) if so, what action has been taken by Government to check the downward spiral in share prices?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO): (a) and (b) Government have been aware of certain reports along these lines in the past. However, bearish as well as bullish phases are usual to stock exchanges. There is no downward spiral in share prices at present.

Income tax arrears of R.S.S.

1556. SHRI SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) is in arrears of payment of income-tax dues; and

(b) whether the "Guru Dakshina" receipts of the RSS are subject to income tax?